

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15

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R 141848Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7423

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 13311

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, GW, FR, US

SUBJECT: TOW MISSILES AND EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION:  
AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH DEFENSE MINISTER

1. DURING A SEPT 13 CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER,  
I TOOK THE OCCASION TO NOTE THAT  
A MAJOR MILITARY PROCUREMENT  
DECISION, INVOLVING THE U.S. ARMY TOW WEAPON SYSTEM,  
PRESENTLY IS BEING CONSIDERED AT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY.  
I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE  
DEFENSE MINISTRY TO MAKE A FAVORABLE DECISION CONCERN-  
ING TOW PROCUREMENT, IN LIGHT OF ITS SUPERIOR MILITARY  
CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPABILITY AND THE ROLE THAT  
PROCUREMENT WOULD DOUBTLESS PLAY IN THE FORTHCOMING  
OFFSET NEGOTIATIONS.

2. IN REPLY, LEBER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TOW IS AN  
EXCELLENT WEAPON SYSTEM AND SAID THAT NO ARMY WISHES  
TO HAVE AN UNDUE PROLIFERATION OF THE SAME TYPE OF  
WEAPON SYSTEMS. ON THE OTHER HAND, LEBER SAID THE  
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GERMANS MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BEARING ON FRENCH RELATIONS WITH BONN AND WITH NATO. DURING HIS JUNE MEETING IN BONN WITH GALLEY, LEBER HAD EMPHASIZED THE GERMAN WISH TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE EUROGROUP IN BUILDING COMMON CONCEPTS AND PROGRAMS ON TRAINING, LOGISTICS, EQUIPMENT, PROCUREMENT, ETC. LEBER SAID HE HAD TOLD GALLEY THAT THE INTENSIFICATION OF THIS MULTILATERAL COOPERATION COULD AT ONE POINT TEND TO REDUCE THE GERMAN POSSIBILITY FOR BILATERAL PROCUREMENT PROJECTS WITH FRANCE. SO FAR, HOWEVER, THE FRENCH HAD NOT BEEN READY TO RESPOND BY JOINING THE EUROGROUP. INSTEAD DEBRE'S EARLIER PROPOSAL FOR A "EUROPEAN ARMAMENTS COMMUNITY INCLUDING SWITZERLAND AND SPAIN," WHICH THE FRG HAD REJECTED, HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY THE FRENCH INITIATIVE ON THE WEU.

3. LEBER SAID HE WAS DETERMINED THAT THE EUROGROUP PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION WITHIN NATO AND IN CARRYING EUROPE'S FAIR SHARE OF THE DEFENSE BURDEN. HOWEVER, THE FRENCH CONNECTION TO BONN AND TO NATO WAS A POLITICAL FACTOR THAT COULD NOT BE IGNORED. LEBER SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER BOTH THAT POLITICAL FACTOR AND THE POINTS I HAD RAISED ON TOW IN CONNECTION WITH THE UPCOMING PROCUREMENT DECISION.

HILLENBRAND

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